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The Druids were priests of ancient Celtic Britain and Gaul. (1) They constituted a priestly upper class in command of a highly ritualistic religion, which apparently worshipped ancient nature gods. Highly educated themselves, they directed the education of the youth and judged without appeal all controversies. (2) They paid no taxes. If anyone disagreed with their decisions, he was excommunicated and thereafter was refused admittance to all their religious services and barred from all communication with his relatives, friends and countrymen. They never committed to paper any of their rituals or ceremonies. Consequently what is known comes second hand from the Romans, notably Julius Caesar. (3) Rome was well aware of the Druids as they formed its chief adversaries in the lands held by the Celtic tribes.

At the head of their organization was the Arch Druid. He was supported by Arch Flamens and Flamens. They had three orders, the Vates or Bards, the Prophets and the Druids. Before a candidate was accepted into the first degree he had to undergo a careful preparation which could in some cases last for twenty years. In the first degree or order he was taught fortitude, which they considered one of the leading traits of perfection. In the second order, the candidate underwent lustration after which he was instructed in the morality of the order. Very

1 Mackey, Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, Vol, 1, p. 221 2 Columbia Encyclopedia, Vol. 7, p. 1886 3 Mackey, History of Freemasonry, Vol.1, p. 201

few passed beyond the second order. Only those of rank were admitted to the third order of Druids where the aspirant passed through arduous ceremonies of purification.

In the third order the candidate was secluded in solitude for a period of nine months. This time was devoted to reflection and to a study of the sciences. In this order, as in the first, he was submitted to a symbolic death and resurrection. (4) At the end he was actually set adrift in a small boat into the open sea, and was left to his own devices to reach the opposite shore. If he succeeded he passed; if he refused any of the tests, he was rejected forever, even when some of these trials could and did cost the candidate his life. This final sacred ceremony was followed by an oath of secrecy, the violation of which could only be expiated by death.

Druids believed in the existence of One Supreme Being, a future state of reward or punishment, the immortality of the soul and a metempsychosis or a conversion into various types of animals. These doctrines were communicated by symbolism.

Some of our ancient Brethren, such as Preston and Hutchinson, have suggested that Freemasonry was derived from the Druids. (5) The theory is advanced that the Phoenicians in their journeys around Cornwall and Wales introduced their religion into the area. This cannot be supported by any proof since what is known of the religion of the Phoenicians bears little resemblance to the fierce and sanguinary superstition of the Druids with its human sacrifices.

The conclusion Dr. A. G. Mackey arrives at is . . . that Freemasonry has no more relation or reference or similitude to Druidism than the pure system of Christianity has to the barbarous Fetichism of the tribes of Africa." (6)

4 Mackey, History op.cit., p. 205 5 Ibid. p. 210 6 Ibid. p. 216

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